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ANCESTRY AND RECOLLECTIONS OF MRS. JOHN YOUNG, ROCHELLE, ILL.

Although I had always been taught that Hon. Daniel Webster had the right idea when he said, "It is wise to recur to the history of our ancestors, and that we are true to ourselves only when we act with becoming pride for the blood we inherit and which we are to transmit to those who shall fill our places," I have been very dilatory as to showing my respect for the memory of my great grandfather, Samuel Watkins, captain in the army of the American Revolution, and at this late day I bring my tribute to the officers of the D. A. R., who deserve much praise for their efforts to rescue many a nearly forgotten record of bravery and suffering from oblivion.

Surely I may be called an American woman, although there is not a trace of aboriginal blood in my veins.

About 1650, when Cromwell was in power in England, Benjamin Peck and his sister Rachel came from London, England, to Boston, Mass. His son, Benjamin Peck, Jr., was born there, and when a young man removed to New York City. Being a wealthy man he purchased tracts of land in what is now called lower New York, in Pearl, Water, Pine, Cherry and Williams streets, Peck Slip and Fly Market. His daughter, Rachel, married Robert Griffith, a Welsh ship captain, in 1741. They were my great grandparents, my mother, before her marriage, being Miss Elizabeth L. Griffith.

My father, Anthony Eager, was the great grandson of William and Sarah Wells Bull. Mr. Bull was born in England in 1689, Mrs. Bull in 1694 in New Jersey. They were married in the township of Goshen, New York, in 1718, being the first white couple married in said town.

On January 16, 1856, I was married to John L. Young, whose ancestors were also among the early settlers of what is now Orange county, New York. They were the Youngs, Trimbles and Stewarts, Scotch and Irish, and arrived in New York about the same time the Eagers, my ancestors, did—1729.

Mr. Young's people and the Eagers lived on adjoining farms from 1741 until 1885. Previous to our marriage the alluring tales of the fruitfulness and ease of culture of the prairie land had caused us to plan for a home in Illinois, and we, like many others of that day, bade adieu to the hills and stones of New York, and set our faces toward the setting sun.

With the high hopes of young people and the best wishes of our friends, we left Goshen, N. Y., on March 17, 1856, to come by railroad to Chicago, thence to Knoxville, Knox county, Illinois, where Mr. Young had relatives. From Monday morning until Friday night we pushed through snow. At Buffalo, N. Y., we were completely stopped by the huge banks which had drifted in some cases above the tops of the cars. After being shoveled out, we kept on our way to Cleveland, having some very unpleasant experiences. After passing through Ohio we found no more snow, and fine spring weather. On Saturday A. M. we left Chicago by way of C. B. & Q. Ry. for Galesburg, arriving there late in the afternoon. There was not much of a depot there and we were literally dumped on the prairie. After considerable talking the stage for Knoxville was found; said stage was a long lumber wagon with some sort of cloth curtains, seats of board with no rest for the back, drawn by four horses. The conveyance was well filled—a man, wife and six children, mostly little ones, from Vermont, two young ladies, and the three of our party. The forward horses balked at once and were quickly changed to the rear and on we went. Our driver said "No time for supper," and our all day fast had made us dreadfully

hungry. We left Galesburg at five P. M., Knoxville five miles away. When two and a half miles on our way we found a place in the road which was to all appearance bottomless; wagon was fast in the mud; the driver politely requested the passengers to get out and assist in prying out the wagon. Was once more on our way, and at ten P. M. arrived at Knoxville; five miles travelled in five hours. So much for the beginning.

On Sunday we looked about our new home. On account of the mud we were compelled to wait at the cousin's home several days before we could "get our plunder hauled" as the carrier expressed it.

Oh, what a big out doors it was, open as far as one could see, no trees except a fringe of soft timber at the creek. When the mud dried we had the most beautiful dust, just covered everything. The men in the fields ploughing were hidden in it, and the daily stage from Peoria "kicked up a great dust" as it went on its way to Knoxville.

Time went on, we gradually lost the awful homesick feeling—did not pine for a sight of the home mountains, and learned to drink the surface water without longing for a draught from the old home well. Everything grew and the prairie was beautiful with the wild spring flowers and coat of fine green grass. But alas, when harvest time came, the miserable little chinch bug was ahead of us, consequently the wheat never was cut, and one of our fine team of horses lost his sight early in this first year.

We found the people much excited by political dissensions, party spirit ran high and in the fall there were three presidential candidates in the field. Political meetings were much enjoyed by the people, especially farmers, and long procession of vehicles and equestrians gathered at the speaking places. I had been taught that women had no business at political meetings, but I found everybody, men and women, went now, so I rode in one procession with Mr. Young, and to tell the truth, felt

guilty at being there. The great questions which were before the people engrossed the attention of all, and persons of every degree of intelligence stated their views at all times and places, wherever they could find hearers. Many political sermons were preached from pulpits, and taking it all together, it was a very exciting campaign. Mr. James Buchanan (Dem.) was elected President and John C. Breckenridge Vice President, entering upon their duties March 4th, 1857.

We had now been one year in Illinois, long enough to take stock of our surroundings, had already made many warm friends. We had found Ohio and New York people as neighbors, and their hearts seemed to go out to us as strangers, but upon going to a new home west of Galesburg, were in the midst of Tennessee and Kentucky people—the most hospitable set of folks upon the earth—and with the kindest hearts. They literally loved their neighbors as they did themselves. The young people were fond of dancing, and old and young loved card playing.

In those times the people were much more helpful to each other than now. If there was a job of quilting, wool pulling, or carpet rags to be sewn, the neighbors cheerfully helped each other. This all tended to foster a spirit of neighborly kindness and good feeling towards each other. Some may not know what wool pulling is. The wool, just as it is shorn from the sheep, is placed in a pile on the floor, and the women sit around pulling it apart and allowing the dirt to fall out so the wool is fit to oil and prepare for carding. So the women picked and gossiped, and at evening a fine country supper would be spread, to which the guests usually did ample justice and then go home.

These years were hard times for farmers. Butter sold for ten cents per pound, corn and pork, the great staples, at very low rates. With all the drawbacks of various kinds, farmers and others found time to look after

churches and schools. Lombard University, under the auspices of the Universalist denomination, and Knox College, a Congregational and Presbyterian school, both at Galesburg, drew students from the towns and surrounding country, and many bright and useful men and women have been graduated from each, as they were co-educational institutions. Sometimes something was learned not in the text-books, and the foundations of many happy homes were laid within the walls of Lombard or Knox.

All this time rapid progress was being made in all that goes to build up the good of the state and country. Farming was being done on new and different lines. Improved farming machinery was invented and bought. Roads were made in better shape and one was not in as much danger of sticking in the mud. Railroads were being built in all directions, and the locomotive took the place of the slow moving horse team in the transportation of farm products to market.

The spirit of improvement and progression was abroad in the land. Homes were made more comfortable, and women found relief from much drudgery by the use of the many household helps.

The early settlers found much to vex them in the uncertainty as to the validity of the titles to the lands which they had purchased. Unpaid taxes would come up and cause much expense and trouble to the buyer. Finances too were in an unsettled condition, and paper money, which at night was all right to pay the working man's wages, by morning might be utterly worthless. Specie was held at a high premium and very difficult to get.

Borrowers were compelled to pay a high rate of interest and many farmers after paying perhaps all the money they had for land, were compelled to mortgage the farming implements, team, a cow or two, etc., to the money lenders. But years have come and gone, and Illinois money is no more designated as "Wild Cat." This condition lasted some time, and everyone was given

lessons in economy which were found very useful both then and in the following years during the Civil War.

In many localities fever and ague made the newcomers' lives miserable, which led to a great consumption of quinine, as one old doctor remarked that was all that saved Illinois from being one great burying ground. Our record for health is now equal to any other state. Tiling and draining have worked wonders.

In the spring of 1861 I picked up my two babies and went to New York to see the old home and home folks. How good and comforting it all seemed to me; but the mutterings of war were heard on all sides and on April eleventh the news of the bombardment of Fort Sumter thrilled the country. Everyone understood then that the days of concession and compromise were over and the day of reckoning had come. I will not review this, it is general history, but recollection will bring back the sight of soldiers at depots, the hot July days of my return journey west. Young men, the flower and hope of our country leaving home to go into encampment, the tearful goodbyes of friends, the music of drums and fife, the bright new uniforms of the soldiers, gay floating American flags, can never be forgotten.

I was glad to get back to my husband and little home in Galesburg. Soon everyone was busy. Usual duties were set aside. Soldiers must go to the front and their needs had to be looked after. Women worked day and night, busily filling boxes and barrels with comforts for them. Recruiting went on, boys in their teens and men in their prime, went. Wives and children with strong faith that they would be cared for at home took up their part of the burden. The old declaration of peace and good will on earth was ignored. War, war, and reports from the front were heard instead.

The cry rang in all places. I well remember a minister, dressed in full regimentals, including spurs, preached to a large audience in a Galesburg church. His text, "They

have heeded the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly and called Peace, Peace, when there was no Peace." His address was a grand review of the efforts which had been made for conciliation and compromise during the years gone by, followed by an earnest appeal to the hearers to do their duty at once. The hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers" and the "Star Spangled Banner" were sung, which closed the exercises.

The students of both Knox and Lombard colleges responded heartily to the call for volunteers and at commencement time, but few were there to receive their diplomas. Many from both schools made good records for bravery and many gave up life on Southern battlefields.

With this I end my imperfect sketch of bygone times and ancestors. I must plead the excuse of old age for faults, etc. Am eighty years old—A "daughter" since last June. My official number is 93555. Mr. Young died February 21st, 1907. Had been a resident of Illinois fifty-one years, and always was proud of the State and its progress.

Respectfully,

CHRISTIAN J. EAGER-YOUNG.

Resident of Rochelle, Ogle Co., Illinois since 1873.